

GIS for the South Atlantic Ocean

The NOAA Coastal Services Center is working with state and federal partners to develop a geographic information system (GIS) created specifically for the ocean. This project, the Ocean Planning and Governance GIS, covers the Atlantic Ocean off the coastal states of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Data sets within this GIS include bathymetry, habitat areas for sensitive species, jurisdictional boundaries, coastal hazards characterizations, navigational channels, and pertinent legislation.

Chris Friel, program administrator for Information, Science, and Management for the Florida Marine Research Institute, is one coastal manager ready to put this information to use.

"Florida has been attempting to get a handle on ocean governance for about a decade. Coastal zone management generally includes the land's edge and creeps out to the nearshore waters," says Friel, "yet the ocean is a critical component when one thinks of comprehensive coastal resource management. We need to take a more proactive role in protecting this deep water resource."

Friel says ocean-related issues are complex and numerous, and include recreational and commercial fishing problems, oil and gas exploration and leasing, endangered species management, beach nourishment, and pharmaceutical research. Federal agencies generally take the lead in most of these permitting questions, but states play an active role in this decision making process.

"The ocean governance debate is not a grab by the states for more jurisdiction, but is a recognition that the marine ecosystem is a continuum from terrestrial to offshore," says Friel. "States can use the ocean GIS for their nearshore issues, and to take a more knowledgeable stand when it comes to

commenting on federal permits that pertain to ocean issues."

Florida has been particularly progressive in the development of ocean GIS with a project called the Statewide Ocean Resource Inventory (SORI). The Ocean Planning and Governance GIS project allows the NOAA Coastal Services Center to expand this effort to the four-state region.

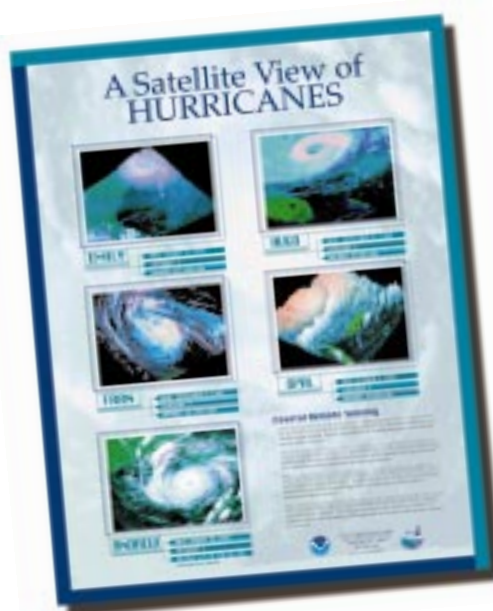
In addition to the spatial data ordinarily found in a GIS, the Ocean Planning and Governance GIS will contain information about federal laws. (Local and state regulations will be added in the future.) Users will be able to pinpoint an area and quickly determine which statutes, such as the Ocean Dumping Act or the

Marine Mammals Protection Act, are applicable to that area. Users then may either review a summary of the legislation or the entire document.

Partners in the Ocean Governance project include state coastal programs, NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, and the U.S. Minerals Management Service. The prototype is expected to be complete in October 1998. The web site will be advertised via this newsletter.

For more information about the Ocean Planning and Governance GIS, call Cindy Fowler of the NOAA Coastal Services Center at (843) 740-1249.

A Satellite View of Hurricanes



Five hurricane images and information about the Center's remote sensing department are included on this poster. To receive a copy, contact the Center.

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